
Impact of The Pandemic on The Mental Health Of Journalists in Blitar City During PPKM

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Abstract

The threat of the corona virus makes journalists have to work extra. They have to adapt this situation. Media institutions are also very much needed to educate and provide awareness for the public in the Covid-19 pandemic era. However, pandemic era has made the work of journalists more dangerous and full of risk. Journalists has high mobility and dynamics so they often feel anxious at work because they meet many people. Based on the these facts, the researcher conducted a study about impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of journalists in Blitar city during the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM). This research uses a qualitative approach. The researcher collects data from journalists during the news production process, which is divided into pre-production, production, and post-production. They cover the news in Blitar city and have been exposed to Covid. The researchers also wanted to learn about journalists' efforts to maintain mental health during the pandemic. From the data analysis, it can be concluded that Covid-19 has had an impact on various sectors including journalists and media industry. Pandemic has changed the pattern of interaction and adaptation of technology rapidly. During pandemic the duty of a journalists is very difficult and challenging. Journalists often ignore mental disorders such as anxiety, fear, working extra hours, and more vulnerable to catching covid-19.

Keywords : *Impact of Pandemic , Journalists, Mental Health, PPKM,*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the world of journalism. The threat of the corona virus makes journalists have to work extra and adapt when covering news and dealing with sources. They are at the forefront of providing fast and accurate information to the public. Press institutions are also very much needed to educate and provide awareness for the public in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era. The Minister of Communication and Information, Johnny G. Plate, said that journalists play a role in countering the increasing number of hoaxes. During the pandemic, Kominfo has found that there were 1,929 hoax issues circulating in cyberspace. Even the distribution reached 4,855 contents on social media. So mass media is very important to give credible information and to resist fake news (Vidi, 2021).

In fact, pandemic era has made the work of journalists more dangerous and full of risk. At Konferta IX of the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) in Semarang City on Sunday (28/3/2021) it was declared that in the pandemic era, journalist organizations must fight for idealism and professionalism, contribute to prosperity and avoid layoffs from media companies (Finesso, 2021). The same condition was also declared in a virtual discussion held by the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) on Monday, October 26, 2020. Tika Adriana from the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Jakarta said that

pandemic era has resulted in changes of industrial media such as advertising. So the company must reduce costs or other expenses, reduce employees, cut salaries and even layoffs. Journalists also got pressure from the environment, such as the flood of information on social media and information spreads so fast in the digital age (Yulis, 2020). It makes journalists be able to be easily mental health disorders during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has a great impact on mental health. The four main factors that cause depression during pandemic include distance and social isolation, the economic recession, traumatic stress in healthcare workers, then stigma and discrimination (Thakur and Jain, 2020). Mental is related to the mind and human character. Mental health is very important to achieve their life goals. Mental health is the realization of harmony between the functions of the soul and having the ability to solve problems and feel positively about their happiness and abilities. The functions of the soul such as thoughts, feelings, attitudes of the soul, views, and life beliefs, must be able to help each other. It keeps other people from doubt and indecisive (Zakiyah, 1995).

Mental health is also influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include personality, physical, development and maturity, psychological requirements, behaviour to deal life problems, meaning of life, and balance of thought. While external factors are situation of social, economic, political, procedures and customs. But internal factors are dominant. It was explained that the serenity of life, the comfort of the soul or the inner happiness did not depend on external factors. But it depends how to deal these factors.

The profession of journalists has high mobility and dynamics so they often feel anxious at work because they meet many people. During the Covid-19 pandemic, stress or work deadlines make journalists vulnerable to mental health issues. Based on the these facts, the researcher conducted a study "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health of Journalists in Blitar city during The Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM)". The researchers also wanted to learn about journalists' efforts to maintain mental health during the pandemic.

This research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of verbal or written words from people and observed behavior (Moleong, 2000). The research was conducted from September to November 2021 in Blitar City with in-depth interviews, observations and documentation studies. The researcher collects data from journalists during the news production process, which is divided into pre-production, production, and post-production. They cover the news in blitar city and have been exposed to Covid. Apart from interview, documentation studies were conducted to obtain supporting and other complementary data. The research was analyzed using Miles Huberman's qualitative data analysis technique and through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2004). Data validation was carried out by triangulating sources and methods (Moleong, 1996).

2. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Policies of Journalists Organizations in Indonesia Regarding Covid-19

The government issued various restrictive policies to suppress the spread of Covid-19, such as physical distancing and working from home (WFH) . Which have had a major impact on the activities and patterns of reporting for journalists. They have

a responsibility to their profession to give information about Covid-19, prevention, eradication, healing and transmission of Covid-19. But on the other side, Covid-19 is very dangerous and deadly. From March 2020 to June 19, 2021, the Indonesian alliance of independent journalists (AJI) reported that there were 381 media workers infected with covid-19. Nine of them died. On the other, during the pandemic, there were still many reporting activities such as, press conferences and they did not pay attention to health protocols, resulting crowds of journalists. This shows that journalists are vulnerable to contracting Covid-19. As a journalist organization on Tuesday, June 24, 2021, AJI exclaimed the government, media companies and journalists to protect journalists from Covid-19 (Ni'matun, 2021). The exclamation consists of :

1. Encourage government and private institutions to participate in maintaining the safety of journalists during the pandemic. For example holding an online press conference.
2. Encourage media companies to implement health protocols at the work environment and provide personal protective equipment for journalists who work in the field. It also guarantees medical expenses for journalists exposed to Covid-19 until the recovery period. Occupational health and safety is the responsibility of the company as regulated in a number of laws such Occupational Safety and Manpower Act
3. Calling on journalists to return to the mainstream creed that no news costs a life. This provision is regulated in the Covid-19 Reporting and Reporting Security Protocol that has been prepared by AJI together with the Committee for the Safety of Journalists, Crisis Journalists, and Disaster Journalists.
4. Encourage the government to accelerate the vaccination program for journalists and media workers nationally.
5. Companies are required to fulfill the rights of media workers who died due to Covid-19, starting from severance pay, service pay, and compensation as stipulated in the Manpower Act.

To maintain the safety of journalists, as well as public safety from the dangers of Covid-19, the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI) also issued a similar exclamation about the Covid-19 News Coverage Guide (Fakhrudin, 2020). There are 13 Guide Points for Covering the Covid 19 Outbreak from center of PWI issued in Jakarta (Tuesday, April 7, 2020) . That points consists of :

1. When covering the news about Covid-19, journalists should prioritize health protection as well as personal safety rather than obtaining news material.
2. Before covering Covid-19 news, journalists must equip themselves with knowledge related to Covid-19.
3. Journalists who are exposed to or become Covid-19 patients or have suspected status or are under surveillance related to the Covid-19 disease. They do not cover the news, and do not even enter the office of the press company.
4. When carrying out their duties in the field, journalists are required to use personal safety protective equipment that fulfill the requirements.
5. Journalists do not conduct interview in person (face-to-face) with Covid-19 sufferers. If you have to interview using a communication tool such as a mobile phone or video conference (long distance). Previously, you have had to get permission from the Covid-19 patient, special permission from the doctor or hospital that treated or handled the patient.
6. Journalists are allowed to quote and or broadcast video posts about Covid-19 patients on social media. Provided that the video does not contain elements of slander, horror

- or a violation of decency, mentioning and confirming the source of the video or verifying it first.
7. Journalists do not interview and disclose personal data about children with Covid-19.
 8. If there is no urgent and very important public interest, as long as the Covid-19 outbreak is still on going, journalists do not cover directly to the hospital. Journalists do not enter the morgue that keep the bodies of Covid-19 victims. Journalists must be at least 10 meters from the morgue and the body area. If in an urgent situation, they have to cover the incident.
 9. When reporting directly on Covid-19 cases, journalists must maintain the distance minimum 2 meters from the object of coverage even they have to conduct door stop interviews with resource persons.
 10. During the Covid outbreak, journalists do not attend face-to-face press meetings (press conferences), unless they involve large and urgent public interests.
 11. When using drones to cover Covid-19 news, journalists do not disturb the atmosphere, the patient care area, and the public discipline. Also, follow the Journalist Code of Conduct.
 12. Journalists follow the directives and advice issued by the state or government and recognizing associations of doctors. For example, always wash their hands frequently with plain or antimicrobial soap and rinse under running water.
 13. Journalists have the right to ask companies where they work to provide the equipment for protecting the health and safety of their journalists, as well as supporting the treatment of journalists dealing with Covid-19.

The Impact of the Pandemic on Mental Health

Covid-19 pandemic not only has an impact on physical health, but also on a person's mental. Covid 19 has caused various problems and has become a new source of stress for the world community (Fiorillo and Gorwood, 2020; Ridlo, 2020; Talevi, et al., 2020). Other activities such as quarantine, isolation, and social distancing have an impact on a person's psychological health and trigger reactions to the pandemic. Various changes in behavior patterns and social restrictions increase feelings of loneliness and reduce social interaction in society which trigger mental disorders such as schizophrenia and major depression. Anxiety about the health of those closest people to you and uncertainty about future situations can increase fear, anxiety, and depression. If this happens continuously, the impact will worsen mental health conditions and cause disorders, such as anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, stress, and trauma bonding disorder (Fiorillo and Gorwood, 2020; Ridlo, 2020; Talev, et al., 2020).

Mental health disorders during pandemic range from mild to severe depression, such as excessive anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, xenophobia (fear of people from other countries which they judge can endanger their safety), and other mental health disorders. The Association of Indonesian Psychiatrists (PDSKJI) conducted a mental health survey related to Covid-19. They found three psychological problems, anxiety, depression, and psychological trauma. As a result, around 68% of respondents claimed to be often anxious, 67% had depression, and 77% experienced psychological trauma (Mutia, 2021).

The survey showed that respondents had the most common anxiety like something bad was going to happen, worrying too much, being irritable, irritated, and having difficulty relaxing. While the symptoms of depression experienced by respondents were sleep disturbances, lack of confidence, tiredness, and loss of interest.

This condition was felt by respondents half the time and almost all day in the last 2 weeks. While psychological trauma is related to events when respondents experienced or witnessed unpleasant incidents related to Covid-19. The survey was conducted on 1,522 respondents from the island of Java. The majority of respondents are women 76.1% using a minimum age of 14 years and maksimum 71 years old.

The Impact of the Pandemic on the Mental Health of Journalists in Blitar City During the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM)

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the press must continue to carry out its functions and roles. The existence of the press is very much needed so that the public gets credible and reliable information such as the informations about covid-19, education on the importance of health protocols, the availability of hospitals, vaccines and various other accurate information. The press is not only give information for people but media institutions and their journalists have a crucial role as one of the pillars of the nation's democracy. So to support in any situation, journalistic products must to go through a process from planning coverage, data collection, interviews, investigations, data processing, to broadcast in the media.

Based on data during the pandemic, the pressure on journalists is getting higher which has an effect on mental health disorders, such as stress and depression. The results of a survey conducted by the Center for Economic Development Study (CEDS) of the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) Universitas Padjadjaran on journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic revealed 45.92% of journalists experienced symptoms of depression. Then 57.14% of journalists suffered burnout. The survey was conducted in the period 2-10 April 2020 involving nearly 100 journalists from various regions in Indonesia (Masruroh, 2020).

In a virtual discussion to celebrate World Mental Health Day: Keeping Journalists Sane organized by the Alliance of Independent Journalists in Medan, on Friday, October 30, 2021 it was revealed that media institutions must pay attention to the mental health of their workers to be more productive. Juliana Irmayanti Saragih, a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology at the University of North Sumatra, revealed that the journalism profession is

a job with a high level of stress because every day deadlines are pursued and they experience pressure that is not found in other types of work. During this pandemic, negative emotions need to be managed properly so that it does not interfere with mental health which leads to decreased work productivity.

Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with three respondents who represented online journalistic media and print media in Blitar to find out the impact of the pandemic on mental journalism health in the city of Blitar during the Enforcement of Community Restrictions (PPKM) since July 2021. Based on the results of this study, it shows that the Covid-19 pandemic also has an impact on the mental health of journalists in Blitar. This is due to the limitations of direct reporting , vulnerable and at high risk, and the flood of information on social media during a pandemic that requires journalists have to work fast but still produce accurate news.

According to Aprilia as one of the respondents in this research said that since the beginning of the pandemic, the majority of media institutions in Blitar had made various policies aimed at protecting the health of their workers, such as distributing masks, hand sanitizers, vitamins and for their journalists reduced schedule face-to face interview. As a radio journalists in Blitar city, she had felt that the pandemic changed

the journalist's reporting pattern. The interviewees also had to understand the situation if reporter had to communicate by phone. The pandemic had a variety challenges for journalists and media industry.

...during the pandemic media institutions have relaxed the rules when journalist working in the field. In the past, you couldn't rely on phone interviews, now reporters can make appointment and interviewees share informations and record voice notes, but it must be clear and have specific standards for each media. As a journalist, you are often not satisfied when interviewing only by phone because the information often brief. This is very contrary to the habits that have been built so far . When the interview was not flexible, the answers from the interviewees were also very limited. (10 November 2021).

Fima, a journalist from the print media in Blitar City, had the same experience. When she had to interview by phone were the lack of closeness, lack of communication, and limited questions. During the pandemic, social restrictions resulted in limited physical movement and the issue of coverage was dominated by news about Covid, making it difficult for journalists to get new ideas.

This is the biggest challenge for journalists when reporting a pandemic case, they have to produce good coverage but also protect themselves and others (meaning not being a virus carrier). According to Aprilia, it is undeniable that people around her often feel insecure when they are close to her who has been exposed to Covid.

... We feel considered at risk wherever we are. Even though we have taken care of ourselves to the maximum like wearing masks and keep our distance. Maybe at the office we are considered carriers of the virus, because we meet many people. So we are considered carriers. I am aware of this condition, so I always carry hand sanitizer, face mask, etc. Even changing clothes often. But sometimes it is difficult, we don't know that a person who has just been in contact with our(reporters) turns out to be infected with covid. So, I had to take a rapid antigen test or PCR test then isolate for 5 days. But many journalists often silent, if they have no symptoms like fever, cough or other symptoms. Because they felt this is a job risk even they have been traced many times (10 November 2021).

For Aprilia and other journalists who covering and give information about covid in Blitar, they have to go to referral hospital and it's dangerous. It is normal to feel afraid, anxiety and fear of being exposed to covid. Even though they have worn full masks and kept their distance. It is unavoidable the emotional condition that arises when covering things that touch a deep sense of humanity. For example, when covering a family who died from being exposed to Covid, the number of Covid patients in the hospital was so overwhelming that medical personnel were overwhelmed. However, the journalist profession must remain objective.

According to Erliana, an online media journalist (detik.com), the change in the pattern of coverage is not too influential for online media journalists. Even more efficient in terms of time and energy. Because so far rely more on the use of digital technology and internet speed to be able to convey information to the public, this is different with electronic media which require more visual data. According to him, the

situation faced or felt during the pandemic was more of a saturation because the habit of gathering together during coverage was no longer free due to social distancing. This saturation has an impact on coverage ideas which are sometimes also monotonous or underdeveloped. To reduce boredom, they usually do activities such as channeling their respective hobbies.

Since the implementation of The Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) in July 2021, the pattern of coverage or news coverage techniques has gradually started to run normally. News coverage technique is the method used by journalists in receiving information related to events that are or have occurred in the community. Before compiling and broadcasting news through the media, a journalist must know about issues or information. The technique of covering information can be done in various ways, such as interviews, regularly visiting government or private agencies, or other areas where things can become news (beat system) possible (Romli, 2000).

It can also be interpreted, how to cover news with this system is done by "posting" or hanging out in exclusive places, which usually get various information from these places and deserve to be known by the public (Romli, 2000). There are several ways that journalists can do when covering issues, namely: during normal situations or before the pandemic the informal interviews via telephone, email and formal interview, press conferences, press tours and press releases. After the pandemic, the high number of Covid-19 sufferers became a challenge for every journalist when carrying out reporting activities. The pattern of coverage is more using technology such as telephone interviews, whatsapp groups, press releases, zoom. However, many unexpected things can happen during coverage. In fact, this situation forces journalists to look for various alternatives to fulfill of reporting deadlines.

Based on Aprilia's experience as a reporter in the health sector in Blitar who has to provide updates information about Covid-19, when attending online press conferences or pre-releases, information is often conveyed in only one direction. In terms of work safety, this situation is favorable, not optimal because there are many questions and problems that cannot be answered immediately. After entering the PPKM period, the policies of the government and other agencies began to change, coverage was running normally, press conferences began to be held openly by inviting journalists. In fact, interviewees asked for face-to-face interviews. Unfortunately, during the PPKM period, health protocols were often violated in the absence of social distancing which made journalists anxious and vulnerable to being exposed to Covid. The Covid-19 vaccination program is very helpful from a psychological point of view when journalists are reporting.

The impact of Covid-19 on journalists' work patterns is the 24-hour news cycle. As a consequence of media workers in the field they must be ready to serve whenever needed. This makes them less rested and has an impact on physical decline. These various conditions finally create empathy, cooperation and mutual assistance between journalists and related parties (government and all parties who are sources of news) so that journalists can access information needed during a pandemic, for example regarding the availability of hospitals for covid patients, availability of oxygen cylinders, health education during a pandemic, health protocol, and prevention of covid.

How Journalists Are Managing Their Mental Health During Pandemic

The pandemic has been going for two years and the world is still struggling from this virus. In a discussion entitled "Journalists' Mental Health Management" organized by the Federation of Independent Media Workers Unions (FSPM), it was revealed that during the pandemic, journalists' mental health problems that emerged were stress, anxiety and depression. Psychologist Sustriana Saragih revealed a solution to treat journalists' mental health disorders in order to increase productivity. For example, by holding outbound or gathering every 3 or 6 months. Preventive measures are the best choice because the treatment will be easier than if the person already has a mental health disorder (Ashari, 2019). This is in line with the explanation of law number 18 of 2014 which states that the Constitution has guaranteed everyone to live in physical and spiritual prosperity and to obtain health services by implementing health development. It is necessary to fulfill health services in an integrated, comprehensive and sustainable manner through promotive or improvement efforts, preventive or preventive measures, curative means healing, and rehabilitative which means recovery.

In maintaining the mental health of journalists, Maverick Indonesia (a communications consulting company in Indonesia) collaboration with the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia initiated a program for journalists affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The program is called #ForJurnalID and Mental Recovery. The program aims to provide assistance to journalists' mental health which must be maintained and restored. Chairman of AJI Indonesia, Sasmito Madrim, said that the long workload and changes in work patterns and the lack of face-to-face or direct interaction were one of the causes of mental health problems experienced by journalists. The program consists of sharing sessions with professional psychologists and one-on-one counseling sessions in collaboration with the Pulih Foundation (Yanti, 2021).

When someone is stressed, they forget to fulfill basic needs, such as food, personal hygiene and getting enough rest. If you eat low nutrient food at long time, this condition have an impact on nutritional deficiency and decrease in nutritional status (Bonnie, 2000). So that mental health can be handled independently by consuming foods that are highly nutritious, getting enough sleep, reducing of caffeine and alcohol, sedatives, quit smoking, regular exercise and physical activity as well as doing simple relaxation methods, such as yoga or meditation. (Promkes, 2018).

The various mental health programs for journalists during the pandemic, it turns out that they have not touched journalists in the regions, especially Blitar city. Based on the results of interviews with research subjects, it depend on media policies and awareness of the journalists. During the PPKM period, interviewees felt more comfortable if they met face-to-face with the journalists who covered them. This condition is vulnerable for journalists in the field. Even various activities to gather the people such as press conferences have also been running normally. So it's very important for using masks properly, washing hands, always carrying hand sanitizers and participating in the vaccine program to eliminate anxiety and fear of being exposed while protecting themselves and the people around them. Then, media institutions always provide facilities for rapid antigen or PCR for their journalists .

3. CONCLUSION

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that Covid-19 has had an impact on various sectors including journalists and media industry. Pandemic has changed the pattern of interaction and adaptation of technology rapidly. So that, journalists are

required to adapt. During pandemic the duty of a journalists is very difficult and challenging. Journalists often ignore mental disorders such as anxiety, fear, working extra hours, and more vulnerable to catching covid-19. When the majority of employee are doing their job from home, some journalists going out to interviewing people or covering the news. The profession of journalists has high mobility and dynamics, so they often feel anxious at work because they meet many people. During the Covid-19 pandemic, stress or work deadlines make journalists vulnerable to mental health issues. PPKM policy is enforced , news reporting pattern returned without restrictions such as at the beginning of the pandemic. Gathering activity such as press conferences running normally. So, Journalists asked vaccine programs and health protocols must continue to be intensified to reduce the risk of transmitting Covid-19.

4. SUGGESTION

The researchers suggest that media institutions, journalist organizations and the government give support and safety protective equipment during the pandemic. If they have ever been exposed to covid, don't forget to give treatment to restore their mental health, also the journalist economic assistance program for helping them and minimize mental health problems encountered during the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM).

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